

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 5242

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to supporting media literacy and digital citizenship.

**Brief Description:** Supporting media literacy and digital citizenship.

**Sponsors:** Senators Liias, Short, Frockt, Hunt, Keiser, Nguyen, Saldaña and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/19/21, 3/25/21 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to establish a grant program, with specified components, for the purposes of supporting media literacy and digital citizenship through school district leadership teams, subject to state funding.
- Requires the OSPI to convene two regional conferences on the subject of media literacy and digital citizenship, subject to state funding.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Bergquist, Callan, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Steele and Stonier.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McEntire.

**Staff:** Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

## **Background:**

Educational Technology Learning Standards. The state learning standards for educational technology literacy and technology fluency identify the knowledge and skills that all public school students need to know and be able to do in the areas of technology and technology literacy. "Technology literacy" is defined in statute as the ability to responsibly, creatively, and effectively use appropriate technology to communicate; access, collect, manage, integrate, and evaluate information; solve problems and create solutions; build and share knowledge; and improve and enhance learning in all subject areas and experiences. Statute specifies that technology fluency builds upon technology literacy and is demonstrated when students: apply technology to real-world experiences; adapt to changing technologies; modify current and create new technologies; and personalize technology to meet personal needs, interests, and learning styles.

Educational Technology Resources and Policies. Legislation enacted in 2016 and 2017 directed the development of resources and policies related to educational technology. First, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) was required to convene an advisory committee to develop best practices and recommendations for instruction in digital citizenship, Internet safety, and media literacy, and to create a web-based location with links to the recommendations. An OSPI resource document defines media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and act using a variety of forms of communication. The OSPI was also directed to identify and develop open educational resources to support digital citizenship, media literacy, and Internet safety in schools, where the media literacy resources consist of a balance of sources and perspectives. Open educational resources are teaching and learning materials in the public domain or released under an open license that permits their free use, adaptation, and sharing.

Second, the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) was directed to revise its model policy and procedures on electronic sources and Internet safety to better support digital citizenship, media literacy, and Internet safety in schools. Finally, school districts were required to annually review policies and procedures on electronic resources and Internet safety considering best practices and other resources, as well as the WSSDA model policy and procedures.

Media Literacy Grant Program. The 2019-21 Operating Budget appropriated \$150,000 in each fiscal year to the OSPI to establish the media literacy grant program. The 2020 Supplemental Operating Budget appropriated an additional \$70,000 to the OSPI for five media literacy pre-conferences that coincide with the OSPI's regional conferences in social studies, English language arts, health, and technology. The supplemental operating budget also directed the OSPI to develop a plan for identifying and supporting a group of 100 kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) media literacy champions who are K-12 professionals that promote, support, and provide media literacy education in their school districts, and to report to the Legislature by the end of the year. These provisions in the supplemental operating budget were vetoed by the Governor.

Teacher-Librarians and School Library Information and Technology Programs. School library information and technology programs, staffed by teacher-librarians, provide a broad, flexible array of services, resources, and instruction that support student mastery of the state learning standards in all subject areas. The teacher-librarian must collaborate as an instructional partner to help all students meet the content goals in all subject areas, and assist high school students completing high school and beyond plans required for graduation.

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**Summary of Bill:**

Grant Program. Subject to state funding, the OSPI must establish a grant program for the purposes of supporting media literacy and digital citizenship through school district leadership teams. The OSPI must establish and publish criteria for the grant program, and may accept gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources for the grant program.

For a school district to qualify for a grant, the grant proposal must provide that the grantee create a district leadership team that develops a curriculum unit on media literacy or digital citizenship, or both, that may be integrated into social studies, English language arts, or health. In developing the curriculum unit, school districts are encouraged to work with school district teacher-librarians or a school district library information technology program, if applicable. The developed curriculum unit must be made available as an open educational resource. Grant recipients are expected to evaluate the curriculum unit they develop.

Up to 10 grants per year must be for establishing media literacy professional learning communities with the purpose of sharing best practices in media literacy. These grant recipients must develop an online presence for their community to model new strategies and to share ideas, challenges, and successful practices. These grant recipients must also attend group meetings convened by the OSPI for the purpose of sharing best practices and strategies in media literacy education.

At least one grant awarded in each award cycle must be for developing and using a curriculum that contains a focus on synthetic media as a major component. "Synthetic media" means an image, an audio recording, or a video recording of an individual's appearance, speech, or conduct that has been intentionally manipulated with the use of digital technology in a manner to create a realistic but false image, audio, or video.

A school district that receives a grant under this program is not prohibited from receiving a grant in subsequent grant cycles.

Conferences. Subject to state funding, the OSPI must convene two regional conferences on

the subject of media literacy and digital citizenship. The conferences should highlight the work performed by the recipients of the grant program, as well as best practices in media literacy and digital citizenship. The locations for conferences must include one site in Western Washington and one site in Eastern Washington.

Expiration Date. The grant and conference provisions expire July 31, 2031.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Social medial literacy and digital citizenship grows in importance by the minute. It is crucial that generations to come have an education system that is as adaptive and responsive as possible.

Media literacy is no longer just about reading and writing, it is about discerning verifiable and reliable information versus trolling. Online hatred perpetuated through social media and false information bears some responsibility for the shootings that have occurred. The future of the state and the world depends on students having the skillset to navigate a fast-paced information space.

Many students do not realize that social media is laden with algorithms that track their searching. Students admit that they become obsessed with social media that can spiral them into terrible headspace that for some students ends tragically.

"Kids and teens" lives are very digital, and they depend on technology. Many kids and teens are experiencing body shaming, racism, sexism, and homophobia online. Some students use computer applications that allow them to talk to strangers online and this can be dangerous. If these students are taught the dangers of social medial and the Internet, they will be safer online and in real life. Cleaning up the digital environment is not easy but educating students and giving them better tools to empower them online is important.

Educators must have access to diverse lessons that help children understand media literacy in this age of misinformation and disinformation. Media literacy evolves, so new lessons need to continue to be created. Curriculum development is expensive.

The bill builds on a successful grant program that was funded by the operating budget two years ago. During that time school district teams have created dozens of openly licensed

curriculum units at all grade levels, which have been shared across the state. These curriculum units integrate social studies, language arts, or health with media literacy. All curriculum units developed using these grants must be available as open educational resources, which means they are available for free to Washington educators. This saves school districts and taxpayers money.

Media literacy is a team effort. Professional learning communities and conferences are cost effective means for helping to ensure that small and rural districts are not left out of the conversations about media literacy.

Library media specialists are uniquely qualified to make sure that this policy will be a success and widespread across the state. The resources created under the bill can be used to help parents learn how bias influences perceptions of media and the world, so they can teach this to their children.

As a result of this 10-year grant program, students will become critical thinkers, better consumers, and prepared for a changing digital landscape.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Lias, prime sponsor; Carissa Crum, Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Carolyn Logue, Washington Library Association; Hillary Marshall, Washougal High School Library and Washington Library Association; Mark Ray; Dennis Small, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Joseph Jerome, Common Sense Media; Morgen Larsen, Central Valley High School and Northwest Council for Computer Education; Shelby Reynolds, Northshore School District, Washington State PTA and Action for Media Education; Shawn Sheller, Action for Media Education; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; and Sarah Kneller.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.